MUSICAL GENIUS AND RELIGION

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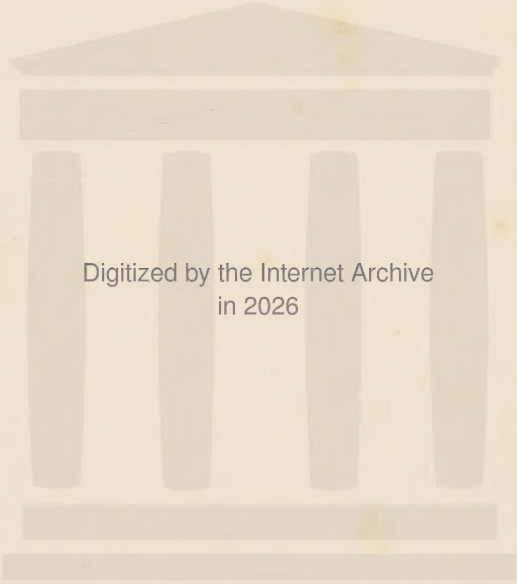
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BY

ROBERT TURNBULL

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"*The sole end and aim of general-bass, like that of all music, should be nothing else than God's glory and pleasant recreations.*"—BACH.

"*When I think of the Divine Being, my heart is so full of joy that the notes fly off as from a spindle, and as I have a cheerful heart, He will pardon me if I serve him cheerfully.*"

HAYDN.

"*I have God ever before my eyes; I acknowledge His love, His mercy and pity towards His creatures; He will never forsake His servants. I submit myself wholly to His will, and so it cannot fail, I must be happy and content.*"

MOZART.

"*If I am spared for some years to come, I will thank the Omniscient, the Omnipotent for the boon, as I do for all others, weal and woe.*"

"*Hard is thy situation at present; but He above is, oh, He* **IS**, *and without Him nothing is.*"

"*God, God, my Refuge, my Rock, Thou seest my heart! Oh hear, ever ineffable One, hear me, Thy unhappy, most unhappy of all mortals.*"—BEETHOVEN.

"*So I am said to have become a saint! If this is intended to convey what I conceive to be the meaning of the word, and what your expressions lead me to think you also understand by it, then I can only say that, alas! I am not so, though every day of my life I strive with greater earnestness, according to my ability, more and more to resemble this character.*"

MENDELSSOHN.

"*Only the love that springs from pity, and carries its compassion to the utmost breaking of self-will, is the redeeming Christian Love, in which Faith and Hope are included of themselves—Faith as the unwavering consciousness of that moral meaning of the world, confirmed by the most Divine exemplar; Hope, as the blessed sense of the impossibility of any cheating of this consciousness.*"—WAGNER.

had come to the conclusion that there is no future life.

Those who believe in Art for Art's sake, hold that Religion and Morals have nothing to do with Art. Art must be judged by its own laws, and is good or bad only as it satisfies or fails to satisfy these. From the author of "Dorian Gray" we learn that no artist has ethical sympathies; an ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style. Crime, we are told by Mr. George Moore, may cradle genius, and Religion suckle the commonplace. Ruskin makes a kind of compromise by saying that the best art is the work of good, but of not distinctively religious men. But the question is a difficult one. Many people would like to believe that the great artist must be a good man, and that in so far as he falls from goodness he falls from greatness. We may hold such belief as a matter of faith, but demonstration from actual facts is difficult. A solution of the question, I should say, is hardly possible without much expansion of the generally accepted meaning of such words as goodness and religion.

In the following pages I do not propose to discuss the relation of Religion to Art in general. My concern is with Art that deals specifically with Religion. We might narrow down the question, and ask if non-religious men have treated successfully religious subjects. In music, does a man's personal relation to religion affect his treatment of sacred themes? The believer in Art for Art's sake may insist that religious art is like any other kind of art, and must be judged simply as art; and he is no doubt right up to a certain point. But if he say that the sceptical artist can produce great religious art, the facts—of musical history at least—will hardly bear him out. The greatest religious music seems always to have behind it the ecstasy of the religious man.

Religion, of course, has a pictorial side that appeals naturally to the musical artist in search of a "programme." In Berlioz's *Requiem*, for example, one could almost affirm that the enthusiastic French composer was so much taken up arranging his brass and drums to reflect his vision of the flaming heavens and rocking earth, that he forgot all

about himself and his probable destination when sheep and goats had eventually been sorted out. Berlioz writes religious music as an onlooker. Where in his work will one find, say, the note of aspiration? *The Childhood of Christ* is to some extent a triumph of the artist over the natural man. But it has patches of quite uninspired music and a general lack of cumulative force, that speak of imperfect sympathy with the subject in hand.

Then there is a religious music that reaches us by means of conventions. The force of circumstances that set Fra Lippo Lippi painting "saints and saints and saints again," drove also countless composers into the Church. Conventions naturally arose and through the centuries associations gathered round these to help the composer to create the desired mood in his hearers. To some people, Plain-Song, or the Chorale, or even the mere sound of an organ, is almost a religious experience.

But the greatest religious music owes little or nothing to "picturing" or conventions. What has Bach's *B minor Mass*

or Beethoven's *Messe Solennelle* to do with routine Church music?

The works discussed in the following chapters I have tried to relate in some degree to the life of their composers. I am aware that in dealing with art-works there are dangers in going outside the frame. The subject has been approached, however, in an inquiring spirit, rather than with the intention to formulate theories. If we are not allowed to say that a composer must have something of the religious spirit before he can, through his art, excite religious feelings in others, we may at least leave the abstract question, and ask by what kind of men and under what circumstances the greatest pieces of religious music were actually written. As the material I have used is mostly drawn from a series of magazine articles, an occasional slight overlapping of thought will perhaps be excused. Musical history has been introduced only to give the composers their requisite setting, and, as the book is intended for the general reader, technical detail has been avoided.

GLASGOW, 1907

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is one of the commonplaces of our day that criticism has become scientific. There was a time when histories were written that had merely a literary value. Men looked at the past largely from the literary point of view, and did not hesitate to embroider and elaborate facts as it suited them; they questioned little that had been handed down to them, and their philosophy of history was consequently often built on most insecure foundations. So within comparatively recent years there has been a considerable overturning of verdicts; a whitewashing of sinners, and what one might perhaps call a humanising of saints. The scientific spirit has invaded also Biblical criticism; a "valuable contribution" to this subject is not at all what it

used to be. In all departments of modern thought, theories are rigidly criticised: inference is not permitted out of sight of facts, and the view of the sentimental non-specialist simply does not count at all.

Musical history is little read even by professedly musical people, and one can hardly record any new feeling abroad regarding it. But in the critical attitude towards music itself, if there has been a change at all, it has been in almost the reverse direction to that indicated above. Musical criticism is becoming less scientific and more general. As may be seen in the prose works of Schumann and Berlioz, there has not been wanting a broad, generous criticism in which the human side of the music under discussion is always kept in view. But there has been with it a tendency to abstract music altogether from life. A criticism of a symphony, or even of an oratorio, means still to many an examination of its musical contents with reference to little else. The thematic material is noted and its development watched; effects of melody, harmony,

counterpoint, accent, rhythm, and scoring are regarded as things in themselves, having little or no value as expressions of a particular emotion or personality. Even great composers have sometimes had little thought of music as connected with anything outside itself. In some of the settings of movements from the Mass by Mozart and Haydn, the music has not the least connection with the words. So widely is this felt, that publishers, in preparing English versions, have not hesitated to depart altogether from the sense of the Latin. In Novello's edition of Haydn's first Mass in B flat, for example, the English version of the *Credo* runs, "O be joyful, sing and rejoice before the Lord"; *Et Resurrexit*, "Thou hast maintained my right and my lot, and rebuked the heathen"; *Dona nobis pacem*, "Sing the praise of Jehovah." One might quote many such examples from the composer of *The Creation*. What one really finds in the music is the ingenuous, cheerful Haydn whom the contemplation of the Christian mysteries left with untroubled brows.

Sometimes composers treat sacred words

in other ways. When Handel in *The Messiah* wrote music to "All we like sheep have gone astray," * the spectacle of a lost, shepherdless humanity was evidently far from his mind. He saw actual sheep distractedly running about. Note how the vocal parts rush here and there, now widely apart, now close together, while the instrumental bass with racing pulse speaks of panic and dismay. The chorus might be quoted as an example of musical humour. Would the music be so delightfully exhilarating if it helped us to realise the religious significance of the words? Even the magnificent effect at "And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," is largely a musical one, and owes its power to the contrast between the stately breadth of the new theme and the distracted skipping of its predecessors. Handel, of course, here follows the sense of the words in his own way. When his sympathies are touched he can inform his music with the very breath of his text, but in common

* He really borrowed most of his material from the "Italian Duets."

with other composers he not infrequently writes great music above words into whose meaning he does not enquire too closely.

I need say nothing of the pretty falseness of countless old operas and Masses, in which the aim of the composer and the aim of the poet or librettist are widely at variance. My point is, that at one time, while the other arts touched life at a thousand points, there was a tendency to regard music as something apart, something that, even when brought into contact with words, need not share any part of their life. That tendency has not yet altogether disappeared.

The history of music up to the time of Bach is largely that of a struggle with a difficult medium. Since the perfecting of the medium in the *Well-tempered Clavier*, the progress of music has been towards a wider and deeper expressiveness. Beethoven put into his sonatas and symphonies every emotion of the human heart. Schumann, Wagner, Strauss, and others have tried, by modifying the laws of "absolute" music

and other means, to give to music a more and more definite emotional expression. Music in her early days lifted men's thoughts away from themselves and their surroundings. She was indeed the "Heavenly Maid," with her garments unsoiled by any touch of Earth. In later years composers have put into her mind and heart the thoughts and feelings of men. She mingles in all human affairs now, and in works like, say, Tschaikowsky's popular *Symphonie Pathétique*, seems to have forgotten that she ever belonged to Heaven. In plain language, music is becoming less a beautiful art standing over against life, and more a vehicle for some of the deepest and most obscure feelings of humanity.

This connection between music and psychology—so much insisted on in the work of later Romanticists—asks for a criticism, which in the nature of the case cannot be altogether technical or æsthetic. The study, too, of modern music, with its romantic titles, "programmes," and "emotional bases," has sent critics back to the older masters to find out if after all there

may not be in their music also revelation of "soul states," and not merely wondrous creations of abstract beauty that bring all Heaven before our eyes, but in doing so effectually shut out all Earth. This has led, for one thing, to a lowered estimate of much of the religious music of the past. No one, with any sense of the fitness of things, pretends now that Rossini's *Stabat Mater* is religious music of a high order. Some examples have been given of what is merely secular music tied to religious words. We may now look more closely at some of the great composers of religious music and the works by which they are best known.

CHAPTER II

BACH AND HIS "ST. MATTHEW" PASSION

One of the wonderful things about Bach is the freshness of his appeal to the modern mind. In spite of ancient pattern and scoring, his music moves us to-day with as much power as it moved the honest Leipzig burghers of two hundred years ago. This is all the more surprising when we remember how rapid has been the progress of musical art since Bach's day. Countless compositions, once accepted as the voice of truth itself, have suffered through change in musical language and form, and have now no more than a historic interest. The vast mass of Handel's oratorios and operas lies buried in the past without hope of resurrection. If a large public still applauds *The Messiah*, its composer can hardly be said to

count as a present-day influence. But Bach has always been the musician's musician. In the stress of modern music, with its "tone-poems" and giant orchestras, its appeals to the nerves, its traffic with the fiercest and wildest of passions, one may always go back to Bach, and find refreshment. His music makes us strong. Its sincerity keeps us sincere, its vigour stimulates us, its matchless art is ever our wonder and delight. Living with Bach we can never be deceived by what in music is false and base. With all great teachers, Bach both inspires and reproves.

Unlike Handel, Bach lived a simple and comparatively obscure life. Handel was continually in the eye of the public, working at the highest pressure, and allowing himself little leisure for quiet introspection. Bach, who never left his native Germany, spent his whole life in the humble duties of Capellmeister. There is, it is true, the memorable visit to Frederic the Great, during which the kingly flute-player and his court paid homage to the simple old composer, but

that was one of the very few exciting incidents in a generally uneventful career. Without haste and without rest Bach laid the foundations on which the huge structure of Western music was to be reared. He gathered up all the efforts of the past, and gave them new direction. Music in his hands became a thing of unheard-of flexibility, capable of infinite variety and beauty, a perfect medium enabling later generations of composers to voice their message clearly and forcibly. Bach gave to music a new and rich vocabulary. All his experiments were dictated by a heart yearning for a full and free expression. Other men of his time showed astonishing skill in weaving musical arabesques, in mere pattern-making, but behind every note Bach wrote we feel the pulsings of high inspiration. Plato's ideal republic was to be divided into three musical classes, the highest of which, made up of men "gifted with a fine sense of rhythm and the meeting together of harmonies," was to select from among the compositions of the day those having "virtue." Plato's word covers something

that every genuine music-lover knows, something that in great music is as unmistakable as it is indefinable. The "virtue" of Bach's music is its most striking characteristic; there are the secret of its power and the warrant of its immortality.

The immense treasure left by Bach at his death was quite unsuspected by his contemporaries. Handel knew practically nothing of it. In after years Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven may have suspected something of its quality, although they had no idea of its quantity and variety. His greatest works lay neglected through long years, dismissed by the few who knew of their existence as only clever exercises in counterpoint. Then, a hundred years after its first performance, Mendelssohn came across the "St. Matthew" Passion, and gave it again to the world. Since the Berlin performance of 1829, Bach's influence has steadily increased. The Bach convert is nothing if not enthusiastic. It may interest some readers to learn that the old master was preached in England as a

very gospel by Samuel Wesley, son of the famous hymn writer and nephew of the great revivalist. In 1850, the centenary of Bach's death, the *Bach-Gesellschaft* was formed for the purpose of publishing a complete critical edition of the master's works. All the prominent musicians of the day entered heartily into the scheme, and everything was carried through with the thoroughness that characterises all German research and scholarship. Although from the year of its inception the society issued regular annual instalments of the composer's music, their work was completed only in 1896. Not content with this splendid memorial to Bach, a *Neue Bach-Gesellschaft* has been founded with the object of issuing the complete works in pianoforte score.

I mention these facts to show how Bach has touched the heart and caught the imagination of musicians. With the general British public, as represented, say, by the average *Messiah* audience, Bach has not made very great progress. Still, I am not of those who believe that Bach's music will

remain the music of a special class. It is complex, deals often with obscure emotions, and concedes nothing to popular taste. The idea of entertainment that enters so largely into Handel's oratorios is never thought of by Bach. Signs, however, are not wanting that the old master is reaching the larger public. For one thing, our concert-goers are now better educated, and are accustomed to performances of music requiring serious attention. Then, musical composition on its technical side is returning to something very like the Bach standpoint. Strauss and the ultra-modern men approach Bach on the side of daring harmony and contrapuntal complexity. Elgar in oratorio has set aside the Handel-Mendelssohn traditions, and practically gone back to the form of the "St. Matthew" Passion.

In what might be called official religious circles, Bach is not much known. Few of our churches, unfortunately, show a desire to know anything of heaven-sent music that requires more than superficial study, and for much of Bach's religious

music the concert-room is hardly the place. The cantatas and motets are peculiarly suitable for church use, although a great advance in the technique of choirs will be necessary before they can receive anything like justice. Their religious value is of the highest kind. To hear a work like *Sing ye unto the Lord*, from one of the Yorkshire festival choirs, is to have a new revelation of the power of music. The sheer ecstasy of this little work is wonderful beyond words. The "St. Matthew" Passion and the stupendous *B minor Mass* make regular appearances at Leeds, Birmingham, and other choral centres, and during Easter many English churches go to the old master for inspiration. Bach's choral works have received isolated performances in Glasgow and Edinburgh, but it can hardly be said that they touch in any degree the religious life of Scotland.

Bach's religious music voices the tender piety of old Protestant Germany. It is full of half-lights, mysterious as the twilight of a vast cathedral, moving us strangely and deeply. The mystic note is ever pre-

sent, the sense of wonder and awe. On occasion Bach can rise to heights of joy to which even Handel in the *Hallelujah Chorus* or Haydn in *The Heavens are telling* hardly attained. Yet it is all the expression of a simple faith shared by the community. All the joys, sorrows, desires, hopes, aspirations, that make up the life of the pious Christian, are faithfully and touchingly set forth. The theology on which Bach's work is based may, in some of its details, become out of date, but the spiritual element contained in the music is for all time. Some one has said that many of the composer's most touching passages are becoming incomprehensible because they deal with the "obsolete sense of sin." The theological side of this statement I shall not discuss. Wherever men, however, feel the vague dissatisfaction with self, the yearning for higher things that makes higher things possible, Bach will speak with peculiar power.

Bach was too humble to have his Boswell, although, since his death, he has engaged countless pens. His recorded sayings are few, but the simple way in which he in-

troduces religious expressions into his daily work shows abundantly that his religion was not of the kind kept for special occasions. A treatise on figured-bass has this somewhat quaint introduction—"Figured-bass is the whole foundation of music, and is played with both hands in such a manner that the left hand plays the notes written down, while the right adds in consonances or dissonances, the result being an agreeable harmony to the glory of God and justifiable gratification of the senses; for the sole end and aim of general-bass, like that of all music, should be nothing else than God's glory and pleasant recreations. Where this object is not kept in view there can be no true music, but an infernal scraping and bawling." We find D. S. G. (Deo soli gloria) or J. J. (Jesu, juva) written above his scores; or again, on some studies intended for his son:

Dem höchsten Gott allein zu Ehren
Dem Nächsten draus sich zu belehren *

But it is in the music of Bach that we

* Might be freely translated, "For the glory of God and the good of man."

meet the religious poet and mystic, who speaks with power. Mendelssohn said, happily, that Bach's music transforms into a temple every room in which it is played. As an art-form, the "St. Matthew" Passion marks the final stage in a long evolution. The custom of reading or chanting the story of the Passion during Holy Week belongs to the earliest ritual of the Christian Church. To S. Gregory Nazianzen in the fourth century came the idea of setting the story in dramatic form after the manner of the Greek poets, with a kind of chanted dialogue interspersed with choruses. Of the actual music then used no trace can be found. The oldest known *Cantus Passionis* belonging to the Western Church was published in the sixteenth century, but it was probably handed down by tradition from generation to generation for long before that time. In any case, it is known that the Passion was sung in the thirteenth century with three ecclesiastics as "Deacons of the Passion," one singing the words of Jesus, another the Evangelist's narrative,

and a third the conversation of the Apostles and the exclamations of the people. Later the people were represented by a choir, with more telling effect. I need not follow the course of Passion Music in detail. The latter half of the sixteenth century saw German Passion music in the Reformed Church. At the end of the seventeenth century Johann Sebastiani, by discarding Plain Song in the recitatives and introducing original music in its place, set aside an old ecclesiastical tradition and opened up a way for further improvement. . From that point the German Church composers carried on the development of the form until Bach said the last word in the "St. Matthew" Passion.

Bach is said to have written in all five Passions, but only three are preserved, and one of these is almost certainly not by Bach. The "St. John" Passion brings the patience and resignation of the Sufferer into strong relief against the wild, fierce passions of men. The "St. Matthew" Passion, written when Bach was in the full maturity of his genius, is touched with a

wonderful beauty and tenderness. No piece of music speaks so directly to the heart. The work is conceived on a gigantic scale. Two complete choirs are used, each with its separate organ and orchestra. The words of the Evangelist are sung by tenor; Peter, Judas, Pilate, &c., are represented by basses; and other solos are introduced for female voices. The story of the Passion from the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh chapters of Matthew is followed, with lyrics and choruses interspersed by way of commentary or reflection. The solos and a number of the choruses may be regarded as giving the standpoint of ideal onlookers. The chorales, in which the whole congregation may join, tell us of the thoughts and feelings of the great body of the Christian Church in contemplation of the sacred drama. Bach uses the old German chorale in all his sacred works, thus linking them to the common religious life of the people. In the "St. Matthew" Passion it has often a most striking effect. For example, when Jesus says, "Verily I say unto you, one of you

shall betray Me," and the disciples ask "Lord, is it I?," the people interpose in hushed parenthesis :

> "The sorrows Thou art bearing,
> With none their burden sharing,
> On me they ought to fall;
> The torture Thou art feeling,
> Thy patient love revealing,
> 'Tis I that should endure it all." *

The work opens with a double chorus, with additional part for the Daughters of Zion, "Come, ye daughters, share my anguish." The question and answer thrown across from chorus to chorus have a strange effect—"See Him! Whom? The Bridegroom see," "Look! Look where? On our offence." All this is set to music that is almost a pain. Bach,

* I give the English version, which is necessarily inferior to the German. In adapting musical settings of librettos in a foreign language, translators are bound by the accent of the music, as well as by the sense of the words, and this want of freedom naturally does not make for faithfulness of rendering or good literary quality. In the above case the German begins, "*ich bin's*, ich sollte büssen."

a deeply religious man and a mighty genius, grips his audience, as it were, and forces them to look and to feel as he feels. Words may tell us about emotions, or give us material for the play of emotions; they can reach the heart only through the intellect. Music gives us the emotions themselves, creating mood out of sound without the help of words. The story of the Passion is proceeded with in the manner I have already detailed. The fierceness and turbulence of the Jewish mob—mostly reflected in huge eight-part choruses—might almost be called realism, were it not attained by purely musical means. The choruses are not introduced, like those of Handel, as lengthened settings of verses of Scripture, but are an integral part of the drama, and are sometimes only a word or a phrase. Who, that has heard the work, can forget the effect of the single discordant shout, "Barabbas!" from five hundred throats, with the thunder of organ and orchestra for background, or the "Let Him be Crucified!" and its intensified repetition? The chorus of

ideal onlookers is also used with the intuition of genius. One of the most striking numbers is "Behold, my Saviour now is taken," a duet for soprano and alto with accompaniments for three soft wood-winds on separate counterpoints. As the music wails to climaxes of sadness, the chorus burst in with broken phrases, "Leave Him! Bind Him not!" It is as if Bach knew the painful emotions he was exciting in the hearts of his audience, and supplied great moments of relief. This number eventually merges into a gigantic double chorus, "Have lightnings and thunders in clouds disappeared?"

In the solos, "Grief and Pain," "Bleed and break, thou loving Heart," "Lord, to Thee," "Behold, how throbs," "Have mercy, Lord, on me," "In love my Saviour now is dying," and many others, one finds the personal expression of love and devotion. Many are the simple touches of genius. A wonderful phrase on the weeping of Peter lays bare the very heart of grief. A soft, shimmering accompaniment of strings which had encircled as

with a halo the words of Jesus, disappears at "Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani," and the voice is heard naked and alone against a solemn ground-bass. The suggestion is so unobtrusive as almost to escape notice, but, when first caught, gives one a strange thrill. And what shall one say of the closing scenes of the work, the rent heavens, the trembling ground, the tears of hope? The art of the pen, we have been told, is to rouse the inward vision. Under the spell of Bach's genius, the Christian, with almost the vividness of actuality, sees his Master move through the darkest hours of His life on earth. Yet though the power of the work to stimulate the imagination is great, its chief appeal is to the heart. Bach's "St. Matthew" Passion is for all men, whatever their church or creed. In beauty, pathos, love, and tenderness, it stands alone in Christian art.

CHAPTER III.

HANDEL AND HIS "MESSIAH."

HANDEL was a strong, practical man, with a religion of the popular type. Had it not been so, his music would perhaps have appealed less to the popular mind. Handel accepted the current religious ideas of his time, and there are few of his sayings that show him to have been of a specially pious disposition. The popular musical historian, who lives largely on anecdotes, tells us how, when the "Hallelujah Chorus" was being penned, Handel saw the heavens open and God sitting on His throne. We are introduced to Handel in many affecting situations, and are given the very words that fell from his lips. My experience of popular musical history, however, has led me to suspect all anecdotes that cannot be traced directly to their sources. The story

of the "Hallelujah" may be true, seeing that it came down from Handel's time, but few of the countless anecdotes that have gathered round the composer's name will bear examination. Good people with *The Messiah* in their minds would like to make Handel into a saint. But Handel was hardly regarded as a saint by those amongst whom he lived. Dr. Beattie writes, for example, "The 'Hallelujah' of *The Messiah* tends to confirm my theory that Handel, *in spite of all that has been said to the contrary*, must have been a pious man." This contemporary testimony to Handel's piety has a double edge. Probably in his prime Handel did not trouble much about religion. Religion would always touch him on his emotional side, and in his later years he seems to have taken seriously to church-going. What was at the bottom of his big heart we can only guess. That he had great moral qualities there can be no manner of doubt. The most convincing pictures of Handel, the religious man, we get from Hawkins. The following shows a somewhat easy-going Christian—"Handel was

of the Lutheran profession, in which he was not such a bigot as to decline a general conformity with that of the country which he had chosen for residence; at the same time that he entertained very serious notions touching its importance. These he would frequently express in his remarks on the constitution of the English government; and he would often speak of it as one of the great felicities of his life that he was settled in a country where no man suffers any molestation or inconvenience on account of his religious principles."

"The loss of sight and the prospect of his approaching dissolution," Hawkins tells us in another passage, "wrought a great change in his temper and general behaviour . . . . Now that he found himself near his end, his sentiments were improved into solid and rational piety, attended with a calm and even temper of mind. For the last two or three years of his life, he was used to attend divine service in his own parish church of St. George, Hanover Square, where during the prayers the eyes that at this instant are employed in a faint

portrait of his excellences, have seen him on his knees, expressing by his looks and gesticulations the utmost fervour of devotion." From Burney we hear of him several days before his death, expressing the wish that he might breathe his last on Good Friday, "in hopes," he said, "of meeting his good God, his sweet Lord and Saviour, on the day of His resurrection."

Handel began to write oratorios almost by accident. He had for a long number of years been engaged in composing and producing operas for London audiences, who were even more difficult to cater for then than now. At a time when the composer was in difficulties, *Hester*, one of his old works, which he himself had no thought of reviving, was privately sung by the children of the Chapel Royal of St. James. Another private performance on a larger scale by the Academy of Ancient Music led to some curiosity on the part of musicians, a reconstruction of the work, and a successful public performance. Handel, having found a fruitful field for his activities, was, of

course, delighted to continue in it ; and so the oratorio, as a musical form, entered into English life.

For some time the old master evidently still hankered after opera. Endeavours were made to represent *Jephthah* with scenery and costumes, but the performance was stopped by Queen Adelaide, at the instance of the Bishop of London. Afterwards we find announcements like—"*Hester*, an opera, singers in a sort of gallery, no acting." Protests were still made against non-dramatic oratorio, one journal pointing out that there could be less irreverence in singing as Biblical characters in ancient costume than in the dress of the ball-room. Another journal wanted to know why, if a singer may not dress and act as Moses, he should be allowed to sing as Moses. One would think the question of theatrical performances of oratorio a very remote one, but no later than fifty years ago, Schoelcher, Handel's first serious biographer, could write : "An oratorio is intended to represent musically a certain episode in the Scriptures, and why not,

therefore, represent it in reality? Strange contradiction! Devotees permit every dauber to paint the countenance of Christ, to dress Him, and to exhibit Him in the most solemn actions of life; they do not object when he gives Him a face after his own whim, or when he makes Him act (as it were) upon the canvas; but when it becomes a question of making Deborah and Samson act in flesh and blood, they cover their faces with their hands in pious horror. Is it because the artists who would play in an oratorio are not of the number of the elect? But these are the very artists who actually sing in the oratorios. In good truth there seems to be no sufficient reason for such contradictions; it is as if the want of sincerity in religious matters would pass itself off for being truly religious, by taking from the oratorio its form, its light and shade—in a word, its physical life."

Handel, then, introduced a kind of religious drama into England, which took its present form through being acted on from the outside by the English sentiment that will not allow any suggestion of the theatre

in matters religious. We understand Handel best when we compare him with Bach. Bach's music often suggests the cloister. He descends to the inmost depths of the soul, and brings strange, obscure emotions to light. Much of his religious music seems the result of self-examination. Handel is the orthodox Protestant moving in a busy world, a man of action with little time for introspection, swift to receive impressions from the outside, and to record them in terms of music. His is the large eloquence that steps over details. He talks with an authority that has never admitted of question. The well-known portrait by Hudson shows him gorgeous in flowing wig and fine raiment, a man of strong intellect and abounding self-reliance, such an one as might stand before kings. What a contrast to the shabby little cantor of Leipzig, with his heart searchings, his humility, his secret raptures! Handel was a man to move among crowds and to be beloved by them. Bach demands seriousness; so many turn away from him. Handel excites applause; Bach rouses a

vague disquiet. Handel suggests the concert-room ; Bach the cathedral.

We find in Handel a sheer joy of life that somehow carries us back to the old pagan world—a joy, it may be said, that is infinitely infectious. One of the most patent results of this is to be found in the applause that invariably punctuates at numberless points a popular performance of a Handel oratorio. This state of rapturous delight reflected in hand-clappings and smiles often seems painfully at variance with the feelings that the words ought to provoke, and can be accounted for only by reference to the spirit of the music itself. Indeed, any other explanation would reflect very strangely on popular audiences. Of course, I am aware that some of the most moving parts of *The Messiah* are also noisily applauded. For many *The Messiah* has no other value than a musical one.

Handel is "the popular preacher" of music. He can be frankly secular when it suits him, and he has views about means that few of his less eloquent brethren would care to adopt. The using of some of his

discarded secular music for sacred purposes does not trouble him. Even in *The Messiah* there are choruses, the material for which is borrowed from the *Chamber Duets*. Handel's unacknowledged borrowing from other composers, distressing as it is to some of the master's admirers, is not so inexplicable when we remember how great a personage Handel was, and how insignificant were those in his immediate musical world. Handel, when in a hurry, simply took his material where he found it, feeling possibly that he was conferring an honour. Recall the familiar portrait, and think of the others! Could one expect this splendid individual to behave as other men!

There can be no doubt that Handel's religious life, emotionally strong as his music proves it to have been, was very different from that of Bach or Beethoven, or even of more modern masters like César Franck. What is altogether beyond doubt is his mighty musical genius, his rich, strong, emotional nature, his vivid imagination. All this given over to the service of religion may be said to have

made a great, deep channel for popular religious sentiment. In singling out *The Messiah* as Handel's greatest work, the public have been led by a true instinct. There are the beauty and pathos of the story of Christ and His relations with men, reflected in music of irresistible force and directness. For self-distrust and similar spiritual qualities we must go elsewhere; the "assurance" of Handel's music is its most distinctive feature, and in it is perhaps one of the secrets of *The Messiah's* long continued power to move large masses of mankind. The note of confidence that mingles with the beauty of "Comfort ye" runs through the work to the end. How much of joy and freshness there is in "Every valley shall be exalted!" In "And the glory," "For unto us," and the other choruses, we have the Handel who can pile climax on climax with the absolute certainty of genius, who carries conviction by sheer weight of eloquence. And so one might speak of the tenderness of "He shall feed His flock," the pathos of "He was despised," the perfect expressiveness of

"Behold and see," the confidence of "I know that my Redeemer liveth"; or, in the choruses, the hushed awe of "Behold the Lamb of God," the reproach of "Surely He hath borne our griefs" (note the repetition of the first word), the splendours of "Hallelujah" and "Worthy is the Lamb."

For my present purposes detailed reference need not be made to *Israel in Egypt*, *Samson*, *Judas Maccabæus*, *Belshazzar*, *Esther*, *Deborah*, *Saul*, *Joseph*, *Jephthah*, *Theodora*, and the rest. The first four are occasionally performed; many of the others are, like the composer's fifty operas, long since dead, or, at best, live only in single excerpts. "Waft her, angels," now stands for *Jephthah*; "Angels ever bright and fair," for *Theodora*; the "Dead March," for *Saul*. It is a curious thing that the immense audiences that assemble to hear *The Messiah* have so little curiosity about any of Handel's other oratorios. Even the London Triennal Festival could hardly live without its gigantic chorus and its "special attractions." It was Matthew Arnold, I

believe, who said that the man who knows only his Bible does not know even his Bible. Whether this be true or not, it is certainly the case that the man who knows only *The Messiah* has a very limited knowledge of religious music, and is not in a position to appreciate fully even his favourite work. Yet the fact remains that when the best of Handel's other oratorios are given on the large scale necessary for their proper performance, the *Messiah* audiences simply stay away. Is it that Handel is eventually to fall from his position among the great ones of music to the rank of a "one work" composer?

CHAPTER IV.

HAYDN AND HIS "CREATION."

In *The Power of Sound* Spohr tries to show music in all its relations to life. The composer, it is true, hardly rises to the height of his theme, but his work offers much that is suggestive. Nature has a thousand songs, from the "amorous descant" of the nightingale to the symphony of the storm. Music follows man from the lullaby at the cradle to the dirge at the grave, reflecting his joys and sorrows at numberless points. No art is at the same time so universal and so intimate. Yet although this is so, it can hardly be said that music has come into its own. By many its possibilities are hardly suspected. The appeal of music is primarily to the emotions. Strong rhythms excite, gentle rhythms are soothing. Melody, coloured and reinforced by har-

mony, sings itself into the heart. Given even a small endowment of the musical sense, a man may, without much trouble to himself, derive pleasure from nearly all the manifestations of the art. For this reason many are content to enjoy music merely on its sensuous side, ignoring its appeal to the intelligence. Some philosophers—a true philosophy of music has yet to be written—have even failed to see its intellectual side at all. Thus Tolstoy throws his Pozdnisheff into a state of intense irritation because he is deeply stirred by the *Kreutzer* sonata, and is unable to guess what Beethoven was thinking about when he wrote it. Evidently Tolstoy did not realise that the movement of which he writes more particularly has an enunciation, a development, a recapitulation, and a peroration; in other words, a musical "argument," which may be closely followed and may give the mind all the work it requires. Beethoven's *thought* is the music itself.

A knowledge of form leads the music-lover to see in his art a long evolution, to

note the contribution of each age, not to a "casket of gems," but to an onward movement, to distinguish the men who opened up new paths from the men who merely followed where others led; in short, to see that in music, as in other things, no man lives to himself alone; that every great art work is related to the past, and reaches out to the future.

While Music is self-contained as an art, and must satisfy in the first case the musical sense, it can speak to us in many other ways. In "programme music" it lends its emotional and pictorial powers to the illustration of a poem or story. The composer takes the poem or story as his base, and gives us its contents in terms of "pure feeling." Sometimes he attempts painting in tones, imitations of natural sounds, &c.; although realists in music achieve as a rule a very limited success. Then, musical phrases may be used as symbols, as in the Wagnerian "leit-motifs." In *Tristan and Isolda*, *The Nibelungen Ring*, or *Parsifal*, Wagner conveys a thousand things to the intelligent hearer that escape altogether the

merely sensuous music-lover. Music may be further studied as the expression of nationality. The clearness, balance, and restraint of the Frenchman, the strength and insight of the German, the lyric warmth of the Italian, the fiery emotionalism of the Slav, may all be found in their music. No literature that I know brings before us the smouldering unrest and rebellion of Russia like the music of Tschaikowsky. Then, in music in its highest forms there is also the revelation of individual character. In some cases the composer seems to give us in tones the very essence of his personality. Some of Wagner's music tells us more about the composer than all his biographers. In the *Kreutzer* sonata, to which I have already referred, we find not only beautiful music, a highly developed form, and a stimulus to the imagination; we find Beethoven himself.

By a somewhat circuitous route I have now arrived at Haydn and his *Creation*. My intention has been to show that music may speak to us in many ways. Until we realise this we cannot rightly understand

The Creation, which contains many things outside "absolute" music, and is, even more than the musical setting of a religious poem, the expression of a particular view of life and God. *The Creation* is inseparable from Haydn. Handel or Beethoven would have set the story from a quite different standpoint. Haydn was a simple, ingenuous man, who, during his highest productive period, led a regular, ordered life. In his early days he had his troubles. He was the second son in a family of twelve, and his father was a poor man. His first twenty-five years were spent in a struggle for existence, singing in choirs or playing in bands. On one occasion he was forced to spend a whole night walking the streets. Later, in a garret, with an old spinet and Philipp Emanuel Bach's sonatas for company, Haydn was no doubt quite contented. Music has never been in a more healthy state than when she had least chance of laying up for herself treasure on earth. Haydn, however, came gradually out of his troubles, and, after producing a few works with some success, entered in

1761 the service of the Esterhazy family. In those days, it may be said, it was customary for the German princes to act as patrons to men of genius. A sum of money was granted to the composer, relieving him of the commoner musical tasks, and allowing him to devote most of his time to creation. To the Esterhazys and Rasoumowskys music owes a great deal to-day. Haydn remained with his patrons for thirty-three years, and during that time wrote several of his best symphonies and quartets and the oratorio, *The Seven Last Words;* but, most important of all, he experimented with the orchestra and the larger instrumental forms, and made a way for future symphonists. Increasing fame led to some visits to England, from which the old master returned a comparatively wealthy man, with more leisure than ever to devote to serious composition. To this last period belongs *The Creation*, produced in 1798, when Haydn was sixty-six years of age.

Haydn, through all his varied fortunes, was always the simple peasant, bright,

good-humoured, good-hearted. Even forty years of an ill-tempered wife could not affect his high spirits. The deeper currents of life do not seem to have reached him. At least his music shows little of their influence. His religious music has none of the solidity of Handel, the depth of Bach, nor the spiritual unrest and longing of Beethoven. To his gentle, affectionate heart there never came any doubts. He accepted what the Church told him without question. Sometimes in his Masses and elsewhere we meet what seems like flippancy ; but it is only the childlike Haydn dealing with thoughts that are beyond his depth. Once, on being reproached for an excess of gaiety in his religious music, he is reported to have said, "I cannot help it, I give forth what is in me. When I think of the Divine Being, my heart is so full of joy that the notes fly off as from a spindle, and as I have a cheerful heart, He will pardon me if I serve Him cheerfully." During the composition of *The Creation* we get another glimpse of him. "I was never

so devout as then; daily I prayed for strength to express myself in accordance with His will."

Haydn accepts the Creation story in the spirit of a child, and in the spirit of a child he sets it to music. This explains the *naïve* realism that would be almost ridiculous in the work of other men. Such ingenuousness is very rare in great music. A parallel to Haydn may be found in Dvořák, whose *The Spectre's Bride* is familiar to most concert goers. Many of the weird effects of that work would be quite laughable did we not see behind it all the round-eyed, superstitious peasant who believes literally everything he tells us. It is when we take the inspired musician and the big-hearted child to *The Creation* that we begin to understand the work. He speaks to us from every page. The libretto, it seems, had been compiled by Liddell from Genesis and *Paradise Lost*, and was primarily intended for Handel. Haydn brought it with him from London, and had it translated into German by his friend Van Swieten. The version now in

use in this country is a retranslation back into English, and is little more than a caricature of Milton. The oratorio begins naturally with a representation of Chaos, a vague but by no means a fearsome picture. In the opening choral number there is a striking touch that Haydn thought had been sent to him straight from heaven. First Raphael is heard, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; and the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Then the chorus enter in a whisper, "And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The story proceeds softly till "And there was light" is reached, when, on the word "light," there blazes out a great fortissimo chord of C major. It is as if light came in sudden, dazzling brilliance, and filled the world from end to end. Uriel has now a solo by way of commentary, and at "Affrighted fly Hell's spirits black in throngs" begins the *naïve* tone-painting to which reference has been made. The effect, however, is very good where, after discord and chromatics, we

hear, "A new created world springs up at God's command," in sweet, simple harmony, with sparkling passages in the orchestra suggesting a smiling landscape bathed in sunshine. When Raphael takes up the narrative the tone-painting becomes more ambitious. One is amused rather than impressed by the orchestral attempts at wind, thunder, lightning, hail and snow. The completion of "the marv'lous work," celebrated in a fine solo and chorus, leads to much detailed description. "Rolling in foaming billows uplifted roars the boist'rous sea," is an admired number. I know nothing more poetic than the old master's treatment of the second part of this solo—"Softly purling glides along through silent vales the limpid brook." The quiet, flowing melody and murmuring quavers that accompany it create in the hearer just such a mood as the scene suggests. "With verdure clad the hills appear" is pure Haydn, clear, melodious, with all the delicate orchestral embroidery that makes the master's instrumental works such a delight. I need not go through

the oratorio number by number. If the choruses never rise to the greatness of Handel, they have an effectiveness all their own. "The Heavens are telling" has been compared to the "Hallelujah" of *The Messiah*, but in sustained power it is really far below that mighty song of praise. The climax to the Haydn number, however, is splendid.

Some of the songs I have mentioned. The air which tells of the soaring vigour of the eagle, the cheerful carol of the lark, the cooing of the dove, and the "soft enchanting lay" of the nightingale, is quite characteristic, and is another of the favourites of the concert-room. The large part devoted to the love-making and "improving conversations" of our first parents has more than a suggestion of opera. Yet the composer has lavished on it his best. Hundreds of beautiful details are cunningly wrought into the score, reminding one of some of the old religious pictures, in which even the corner of a robe is crowded with careful, loving touches. The *naïve* realism of the work is most amusingly in

evidence at the creation of the animals. There we have the "cheerful, roaring lion," "the flexible tiger," "the nimble stag," "the impatient, neighing steed," "the fleecy, meek and bleating flock," "the host of insects," "the creeping worm,"—all in crotchet and quaver. In "Most beautiful appear" the Leviathan "sports on the foaming wave"; and "Now Heaven in fullest glory shone" introduces us at one point to "heavy beasts," whose ponderous tread (or bellow is it?), represented by the lowest notes of bassoon and contrafagotto, brings before us Haydn's Diplodocus or Megatherium. The earnest, simple old man saw it all, no doubt, and brought his genius to the setting of it forth in tones.

The Creation is not so popular as it was. It is hardly known in France, it is now rather old-fashioned for Germany, and in this country Mendelssohn's *Elijah* may be said to have taken its place beside *The Messiah* in the affections of the people. However, within the last two or three years we have had quite a number of

performances. A revival of *The Creation* may come with a revolt against the extreme introspection and morbidness of much modern music. With Haydn the world grows young again. Some of the critics who stood near to *The Creation* found profundities that are sought for in vain by the modern mind. The bright, healthy message of the work, however, has never been missed.

The religion of *The Creation* is not that of the theologian. Nor is it a cry out of the depths of life. It has in it nothing reasoned out and adopted. It reflects the simple piety of the man to whom life brings only joy and trust in a Divine Creator. It is the expression of a temperament unfortunately becoming rare. The poem of *The Creation* is weak, and many of its musical effects seem to the serious, unimaginative man to border on the ridiculous. But the work, as a whole, has genuine religious power. Looked at rightly, it becomes a picture of Nature seen through the eyes of a devout and happy child. Its lowing flocks, buzzing insects,

crawling worm, its snow and rain, its rolling sea and purling brook, are all eloquent of the same Divine Providence. Haydn is the simple Christian to whom all things mean God.

CHAPTER V

MOZART AND HIS "REQUIEM."

In reading old books one sometimes comes across sayings that have a curious appropriateness to present-day movements. Take this, for example, from Confucius: "Are gems and silk all that is meant by propriety? 'It is music,' they say. Are bells and drums all that is meant by music?" When a Strauss Festival was given a year or two ago in London to enable British musicians to make up their minds about the most advanced of modern composers, this reference of the old teacher to music might have headed the criticisms in *The Times*. *The Times* could find little more than showy noise in much of the new tone-poetry. The presentation and development of musical ideas that underlie all the higher forms of both classic and romantic schools

were frequently set aside to meet non-musical demands. The essence of music itself was changed. Tremendous appeals were made to the nerves. Excruciating discords cut into one as with a knife. Incidents of great beauty only made the whole situation more perplexing. Some shouted "Anarchy!"; others talked of a new and glorious art.

While critics were eagerly discussing the fascinating heretic, a cry of "Back to Mozart" was raised by a section of the musical public. To go back to Mozart meant to return to first principles. Mozart's music is music through and through. Its effect on the heart is immediate. It requires no explanation or "programme." All music is based on feeling, but in Mozart's day it was content to reflect emotion only in general terms. It sought beauty first, and the other things were added. It brought a wonder and a joy into life, that made men forget their sorrows. It came from the heart and spoke to the heart, but it spoke almost exclusively of the things that belong to music alone.

But why "Back to Mozart"? Why not "Back to Beethoven"? The truth is it was Beethoven who opened up the paths that composers now so eagerly follow. To that strangely troubled heart music became in later life the one medium of expression. Even the string quartet, the last stronghold of classicism, was made on occasion "a song of thanksgiving offered to God by a convalescent," or spoke of some questioning of fate or conflict of the soul. Beethoven brought music into close touch with life, and gave it an expressiveness it never had before. It is along the lines of higher expressiveness that music has been travelling since his day. It has in our time, however, been put to tasks of which even Beethoven never dreamt, and the danger is that the nature of music itself, its glories as a self-sufficient art, and its limitations as a teller of stories, may be lost sight of. In fact, it is just here the difference between the great man and the small man is found. The great man understands the limitations of his medium, and within these limitations—one might

almost say because of them—achieves the highest results. The small man knows no limitations, and so often ends in futility. Many of our younger composers are making music merely an incoherent cry of the senses. It is significant that some of the most extreme of modern musicians use their art mainly to illustrate the most sensual of decadent poetry. Emotionalism, uncontrolled by the intellect, seems to lead men always into bogs and quagmires.

Hence the cry "Back to Mozart." Mozart's music is clean and sweet, and is subject only to musical laws. Nothing irrelevant is allowed to enter. The material is stated and treated with wonderful economy, and every part stands to the other in organic relation. To go back to Mozart would mean no more loose writing round "programmes," no more literary excuses for bad music. Tone-poems would be good music first, and tone-poems afterwards. But music can never go back, nor would one wish it to do so. Beethoven and Wagner have added glories to music of which Mozart hardly dreamed. "Pro-

gramme music," too, has come to stay. The point, however, is that Mozart seemed to understand the nature of music as no other composer did. By being true to music as it is in Mozart, by bringing music occasionally into the light of Mozart's presence, composers may guard themselves against error, and may reach the heart of humanity with a directness and power impossible under certain modern conditions.

Not only is Mozart great as an "absolute" musician, but he is perhaps the most loveable of all composers. The recently published "Life and Letters" of Tschaikowsky contains a daring reference to Mozart, no less interesting as a personal confession of faith than as a testimony to the peculiar charm of the old master: "I begin with Beethoven, whom I praise unconditionally, and to whom I bend as to a god. But what is Beethoven to me? I bow down before the grandeur of some of his creations, but I do not love Beethoven. My relationship to him reminds me of that which I felt in my childhood to the God

Jehovah. I feel for Him—for my sentiments are still unchanged—great veneration, but also fear. He has created the heavens and the earth, and although I fall down before Him, I do not love Him. Christ, on the contrary, calls forth exclusively the feeling of *love*. He is God, but also Man. He has suffered like ourselves. We pity Him, and love in Him the ideal side of man's nature. If Beethoven holds an analogous place in my heart to the God Jehovah, I love Mozart as the musical Christ. I do not think this comparison is blasphemous. Mozart was as pure as an angel, and his music is full of divine beauty." Further, Tschaikowsky writes: "To my mind Mozart is the culminating point of all beauty in the sphere of music. He alone can make me weep and tremble with delight at the consciousness of the approach of that which we call the ideal. Beethoven makes me tremble too, but rather from a sense of fear and yearning anguish."

With regard to Tschaikowsky's peculiar relation to Beethoven, it is sufficient to say in passing that the great conflicts in Beet-

hoven's music end in victory; those of Tschaikowsky end in hysteria or despair. In the *C minor* Beethoven thunders at the gate of Heaven; in the *Symphonie Pathétique* Tschaikowsky groans with his face to the ground. Beethoven to Tschaikowsky would seem like an intolerable call to action, while Mozart with his divine beauty and gentleness would be as balm to his soul. Beethoven sometimes smites us like a tempest, but with Mozart the sky is nearly always clear. "The eternal sunshine of Mozart," indeed, is a critical stock-phrase. Mozart suffered, it is true, but his music never loses its sweetness. Its charm for Tschaikowsky, "a child of his age, broken and spiritually out of joint," as he calls himself, may be easily understood.

As I have said, Mozart is musical through and through. He presents no problems such as are to be found in Beethoven's third period. Beethoven's music is something like the Bible; all kinds of doctrines have been based on it. Mozart is the apostle of pure or "absolute" music—that is, music that is self-contained and is obedient only

to musical laws, reflecting life only by being true to itself. I sometimes think the word "absolute" as applied to music somewhat unfortunate. It has a cold sound. Yet Mozart, who was, with Bach, perhaps the greatest of "absolute" musicians, could write: "Genius without heart is a chimera —for it is not intellect alone, not imagination, not even the two combined which make genius. Love! love! love! is the very soul of genius." "Absolute" music may be as fire in the veins, although not one of the words we use as current emotional tickets could be applied to the feeling it excites.

When music is allied to words, it is not usually called either "absolute" or "programme." It rouses emotions, to which the words give clear direction. A song, opera, or music-drama is really a composite work of art, to which literature and music make contribution. I have already shown that when a composer treats a poem with which he is in imperfect sympathy he may fail in one sense even if he be a great musician. What he may give us is a

splendid musical composition which excites and interests us, but which has really little connection with the text it stands beside. The music is the thing; the words are superfluous. Instances of this, also, I have quoted. Mozart's personal relation to religion, therefore, would affect his setting of religious themes. In songs and operas he treated many subjects with wonderful comprehension. His operas are marvels of characterisation. His religious music, it may be said at once, is not considered of the first importance. The famous *Twelfth Mass* pleases because of its brightness and tunefulness. Some of the other Masses contain fine numbers, but, as a whole, they lack the impressiveness that belongs to all great religious music. To begin with, Mozart died at the age of thirty-five, and nearly all his religious works were written between the ages of thirteen and twenty-four. As far as one can gather he did not ponder much on religious subjects. He was a member of the Roman Catholic Church, but at the last he sought no ministrations from her priests. With an entirely un-

worldly nature, his outlook on religion seems to have been as naïve as that of Haydn. The two following extracts from letters to his father may be found interesting: "Have no concern for me; I have God ever before my eyes; I acknowledge His omnipotence, I fear His anger; but I also acknowledge His love, His mercy and pity towards His creatures; He will never forsake His servants. I submit myself wholly to His will, and so it cannot fail I must be happy and content. . . ." "As death, strictly speaking, is the true end and aim of our lives, I have for the last two years made myself so well acquainted with this true, best friend of mankind, that his image no longer terrifies, but calms and consoles me. And I thank God for giving me the opportunity of learning to look upon death as the key which unlocks the gate of true bliss. I never lie down to rest without thinking that, young as I am, before the dawn of another day I may be no more; and yet nobody who knows me would call me morose or discontented. For this blessing I thank my Creator every

day, and wish from my heart I could share it with all my fellow-men." The singular sweetness and beauty of Mozart's character are very wonderful to us when we remember his life of poverty and struggle, the shallow society in which he was forced to live, and all he suffered from misapprehension and intrigue.

The *Requiem* was Mozart's last work, and the story of its composition is one of the romances of musical art. If some of his settings of the Mass occasionally lack the seriousness that one would expect, the *Requiem*, written under such extraordinary conditions, could hardly fail to ring true. In the last year of his life, already worn and ill, Mozart received a visit from a stranger, who commissioned him to write a *Requiem* for some unknown person. A price was fixed, and strict secresy was enjoined. Mozart threw himself into the work with great energy. After the completion of *Zauberflöte*, the *Requiem* occupied all his thoughts, and, as his illness increased, the idea took root in his mind that the stranger was a messenger from the other world and

the *Requiem* was for himself. So we have the strange spectacle of a great genius writing his own funeral service with the whisper of death in his ear. Towards the end, he had the score continually with him, working at it in bed, and discussing its details with his friend Süssmayr. The story has often been told, and never loses its pathetic interest. The last visit of the stranger found Mozart dead and the *Requiem* uncompleted.

Mozart's unfinished *Requiem* was completed by Süssmayr, and, for long, many musicians believed that the whole work came from the pen of the master. But musical scholars have now decided, almost to a bar, what came from the inspired hand, and, it may also be said, have cleared up completely the mystery enveloping the commission of the work.* The music itself is rather difficult to describe. Music has

* The "Noble Unknown," as Mozart's widow called him, proved to be a Count Walsegg, who had ambitions as a composer, and wished to pass off Mozart's "Requiem" as his own! The messenger was his steward.

one great advantage over the other arts. Old pictures of the Day of Judgment, with their lurid skies and countless huddled forms affect us little. We are curiously interested, but hardly realise what it all meant to the artists and their contemporaries. Music gives the actual emotions of the composer. So with Mozart, reared in Catholic traditions, we feel from the opening *Requiem æternam* to the end, the thrill of fear and hope. Much of the music carries our minds back to the old Church with its roots deep in the soil of Europe, the sinner's only refuge from the wrath to come. Mozart seems to feel that the musical methods of the Church cannot help him to realise the *Dies Iræ* with sufficient force, and he paints for us in tones the day of anger and burning as if he saw it all from outside the fold. An inspired touch is found in *Rex Tremendæ Majestatis*, where the three great opening shouts of "Rex!" bring suddenly before our minds a vision of the King and Judge above His rocking, astonished world. In contrast to these startling passages, there are incidents of mystery and beauty in

which Mozart seems to speak with fear and trembling of his own personal hopes. The *Requiem* may not be able to stand in grandeur beside the greater works of Handel, Bach, or Beethoven, but as the last word of the gentlest of composers and the sweetest of singers, it holds a specially high place in the hearts of all true music-lovers.

CHAPTER VI

BEETHOVEN AND HIS "MESSE SOLENNELLE."

In the preceding chapters my intention has been not so much to describe, number by number, certain masterpieces of religious music, as to show how such pieces are related to their composers, and how they have a claim to be regarded as, in varying degree, expressions of the religious spirit. If I have devoted more space to the man than to the work, it is that the work may be better understood. Religious musical works worthy of the name are not simply notes written over religious poems, the mere decorating of other men's religious experiences ; if they are anything at all, they are religious experiences at first hand. The comparative futility of the majority of modern oratorios and Church

pieces arises from the fact that the composer has either had no real vision, or has lacked the genius to make his vision convincing to his fellow-men. Few composers now find inspiration in the oratorio or the mass. The old masters could paint the terrors of the *Dies Iræ*, or echo the hosannahs of the redeemed, because they dealt with things in which they firmly believed. New oratorios or masses are usually poor imitations of dead men's work. Of course, I do not mean that there are no musical composers who heartily accept the creed of the old masters; but, with hardly an exception, modern Church musicians seem unable through their art to make other men share in any new or vital sense the feelings that the mysteries of their faith inspire.*

* I am not forgetting Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, *The Apostles*, and *The Kingdom*. With some truth it may be said that Elgar has re-clothed the religious feeling of his time. The strength of his appeal lies not only in his personal earnestness, but in the modern musical idiom through which he expresses himself. The Elgar oratorios, however, are striking exceptions to the general order of modern religious music.

The real religious music of to-day—if it can be called religious—is music of "revolt." Modern music, when it touches the great problems of life, is three-fourths pessimism. The free, rapturous assurance of Bach and Handel seems to be a thing of the past.

To the understanding of Beethoven, who may be said to have brought the modern restless note into music, we must bring some knowledge of his place in musical history and of his relations to the thought of his time. Although music is often called the youngest of the arts, the statement is not one that is always fully grasped. Why was it, one may ask, that the old civilisations of the world left enduring monuments in literature, painting, sculpture and architecture, and yet left nothing of any present value in the art of music? Why did music, of which Plato and Aristotle write so enthusiastically, remain so long in a semi-barbarous state, and rise to the dignity of an art only a few hundred years ago?

Before the arts of literature and painting could exist, their mediums of expression—

language and colour—had to be brought to a certain state of perfection. The outer medium had to be made pliable, so to speak, before it could fitly clothe the inner thought. Music's medium is, of course, sound. It would take too long to tell the story of the centuries of painful groping that eventually yielded these apparently simple things, the major and minor scales —the bricks out of which the modern musical art-structure is built. Music's struggle with the difficult nature of its medium culminated only with Bach. Before Bach discovered the modern key system, and gloriously justified it, music was hardly more than a lisping child. Bach left it a strong man, looking forward clear-eyed and confident to the future.

If Bach founded the kingdom of modern music, Beethoven it was who influenced it most strongly in all that pertains to its higher development. Since Bach's time the history of music has been, on the one side, towards formal expansion and perfection, and, on the other, towards a wider and deeper emotional expressiveness.

Beethoven is claimed by both classic and romantic. He built cathedrals of sound, perfect in proportion and in detail; he took the musical forms of his day and developed them beyond the dreams of his predecessors; he created beauty that, to borrow a phrase from Shakespeare, almost makes the senses ache. Yet he also interpreted the human heart as no other composer has done. In his sonatas and symphonies we feel at once that a change has come over musical art. Music seems to have passed through a furnace of suffering, and emerged with a hundred new notes in her voice. The gospel of Beethoven's instrumental music is of peace through conflict, joy through sorrow, victory in the face of pain and defeat. What an inspiring work, for example, is the *C minor* symphony! Of the four resounding notes that open the first movement, Beethoven said, "Thus Fate knocks at the door." What follows is a very drama of the soul. Some critics have placed Beethoven with Tschaikowsky in the ranks of pessimists. But the two men are essentially different.

There is a striking picture of the Russian composer, in which he is shown with lowering, perplexed brows, curiously wild, unhappy eyes, and loose, irresolute mouth. The figure, with its hints of tragedy and look of premature old age, is pathetic indeed. Tschaikowsky's last symphony is just the cry we would expect from such a man. Beethoven, as one of his best portraits shows him, might be the *C minor* made flesh. There, too, are unhappiness and conflict; but the steadfast light of the eyes, and the tremendous strength of mouth and chin leave us in no doubt as to final issues. An "unconquerable soul" looks out from score as well as from canvas. The *C minor* is Beethoven's fight with the powers of darkness. It runs through a hundred strange terrors before the great song of triumph is reached. Chopin, the singer of veiled griefs, is reported to have found Beethoven's structure too athletic, his wrath too tempestuous, his passion too overpowering. Certainly in the *C minor* there is no attempt to modify the grim nature of the conflict. No quarter is given

or taken. It is war, strenuous and relentless. Beyond the first four notes, Beethoven has given no "programme" to his work. What adventures of the soul are recorded in the beautiful *Andante* and the mysterious *Scherzo* each music-lover must decide for himself.

But Beethoven is not always a gladiator in the arena of life. In his earlier symphonies he is as happy and inspiring as Mozart, with, at the same time, a certain largeness of utterance all his own. The *Eroica* is a tone-picture of Beethoven's "Greatheart." The *Pastoral* tastes of "Flora and the country green, Dance and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth," yet closes with the religious note. The *Seventh Symphony* is the fulness of classicism. The *Eighth*, besides containing the *Allegretto Scherzando* which almost made Schopenhauer into an optimist, has a breadth of humour for which we must go for analogy to the creator of Falstaff. The *Ninth* or Choral symphony is the climax of the master's symphonic work. That Beethoven, poor, deaf, ill, buffeted by fate,

should close his career with an "Ode to Joy," calling on men to praise their Creator for the good things of life, is surely one of the outstanding signs of his greatness. It is like the passionate assertion of a belief in happiness in spite of all conflicting evidence.

I need not enter into a discussion of the sonatas and other instrumental music. Like the symphonies, they contain the record of a thousand moods.

The range of Beethoven's emotional appeal is wide and varied as that of Shakespeare. He has given us

> "... strains that might create a soul
> Under the ribs of death."

He can woo us with

> "Music, that gentlier on the spirit lies
> Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes."

Beethoven was born in 1770, and was therefore brought under the influence of the many new ideas that ran through Europe at the time of the French Revolution. He met many of the best spirits of his time, and was as ardent a believer in

"the rights of man" as any. The *Eroica* symphony was originally dedicated to Napoleon, but the dedicatory page was angrily torn out when the *coup* of 1804 made the First Consul into the Emperor. While Beethoven never disguised his contempt for mere rank, he had many friends among the nobility, and his treatment of them has frequently its amusing side. The following incident, related in a letter to Bettina von Arnim, shows how completely music has cast off the livery of Haydn. Goethe and Beethoven are out walking together, and their conversation is of kings, and their powerlessness by decorations and patents to make great men. Suddenly the whole Imperial family appear in sight. Goethe takes a humble stand by the side of the road, while the composer, with his hat pressed down on his head, his great-coat buttoned up, and his hands crossed behind him, makes his way through the thickest part of the crowd. Princes and courtiers form a lane for him; Archduke Rudolph takes off his hat, and the Empress bows. Then the procession defiles past

Goethe, who stands with bare head and bent back, the man of genius sunk in the courtier.

It is not my intention, however, to enlarge on Beethoven's friendships. It was in loneliness and sorrow that he had to do his greatest work. Deafness cut him off from his fellow-men, ill-health laid its hand on him, poverty often stared him in the face, ingratitude wounded a sensitive, loving heart. Yet, believing that he had a message that no one could deliver but himself, he struggled on to the last. Bettina writes of him to Goethe, "He begets the undreamt-of and the uncreated. What can such a man have to do with the world? Sunrise finds him at his blessed day's work, and at sunset he is as busy as at early morning. He forgets even his daily food. Oh! Goethe, no Emperor or King is as conscious of his power, and of the fact that all power proceeds from him, as is this man, Beethoven."

It would be difficult to say exactly what were Beethoven's religious beliefs. To call him a Theist, as some have done,

does not help us much. In some pages of his written conversations, we find remarks like "Socrates and Jesus were patterns to me," or "The moral law within us and the starry heavens above us—Kant ! ! !" A few years before his death he copied out the following Egyptian saying, and had it framed and placed on his writing-table :

"I am that which is.
I am all that is, that was, and that shall be. No mortal man hath lifted my veil.
He comes from Himself alone, and to Him alone all things owe their existence."

God was very real to Beethoven, and was continually in his thoughts. In the midst of many troubles, he writes in his diary : "Resignation, the most absolute and heartfelt resignation, to thy fate ! Thou should'st not live for thyself, but only for others. Henceforth there is no happiness for thee but in thy art. O God, grant me strength to conquer myself." Elsewhere we read about his writing music "for the honour of the Almighty, the Eternal, the Infinite." Beethoven saw

God everywhere. He lived and worked as in God's sight. His prayers for God's help and pity are among the most pathetic things in literature; and if his works may be taken as an answer, his appeals were not in vain; Beethoven's song, in spite of many a troubled note, is the song of them that triumph.

In a recent biography of Beethoven, the author is of opinion that the *Messe Solennelle* has elements that "woefully detract from its value as helpful Church music." "Every churchman," we are told, "whether Protestant or Roman, welcomes music that will help him in his devotions; not art that carries the mind away from the Church into the world." The truth of all this depends on one's standpoint. For the hide-bound churchman, the *Messe Solennelle* is a closed book. Beethoven's religion was never an escape from life; it was the basis of all his thinking and doing. That the *Messe Solennelle* has a "suggestiveness of theme and emotion . . . an excessive warmth, dramatic energy and strong emotional yearning, which carry

the mind over the composer's secular compositions" is to me not the least of its glories.

The *Messe Solennelle* was to Beethoven a tremendous task. Composers of religious music before his day had Church modes, plain-song, chorales and other means, in the using of which they could at once get their hearers into touch with the religious past. When Beethoven began his great Mass, he had thoughts of adopting similar means. But he soon gave up the idea. One of Wagner's most happy critical references was to "truthful Beethoven." Beethoven could write only what he really felt; and evidently he felt he could not express himself on the lines of the Church music of his day. Bach's music, beautiful and tender as it is, is the expression of a religious life based on Church dogma. His was a simple faith shared by the community. Beethoven opens up horizons beyond Church or creed. Bach, in the use of means falls back on the liturgy of the Church, which has expressed the faith of millions of believers. Almost without

exception, his cantatas are based on the chorale, and are therefore fragrant with a thousand ecclesiastical associations. Beethoven was forced to ignore the historic base; he had a task to accomplish that had never before been attempted. Besides, if he had broken with religious traditions, he had also advanced far beyond the musical conventions of the past; his search after fuller truth in musical expression had led him to discard largely the polyphonic style of Handel and Bach, and a return to the forms of traditional religious music was as impossible for him as a return to the old religious faith.

Beethoven called the *Messe Solennelle* his "most finished work." It cost him four years of severe strain, and on the completed score he wrote "From the heart: may it in turn appeal to hearts." Schindler gives us some pictures of him, haggard, dishevelled, faint with want of food, working at fever heat—"Never before and never after this period of his complete forgetfulness of earth, have I observed anything like it in him." The work is one of the

greatest things in musical art. Beethoven saw in the words of the Mass human aspiration towards God, rather than the dogma of a Church, and his answer is one of assurance. The wonderful violin solo descending gently from the heights with *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domine* falls on one like a blessing. One might write of the loud cry of the *Kyrie*, the thunders of the *Gloria*, the poignant beauty of the *Agnus Dei*. But words can convey no idea of the grandeur of the music, its passionate appeal, its melting tenderness. As an example of Beethoven's unconventional treatment of sacred words, a passage may be instanced from the *Agnus Dei*, where, in the midst of *Dona nobis pacem*—the prayer for peace—the key changes abruptly, and we suddenly hear the soft, sinister throbbing of drums and the call of distant trumpets, suggesting the terrors of war. To the accompaniment of trembling strings and the persistent drum-roll, a cry to the Lamb of God for mercy is heard timidly from a single voice; another voice takes it up more ardently, and it soon bursts out in an

agonising *fortissimo* from the full chorus. The startling force of this passage, and the significance it gives to the rest of the movement can be fully realised only in actual performance. It is hardly fair to the work, however, to lay stress on isolated passages. The immense power of the music lies in its sustained appeal. The *Messe Solennelle* is like a prophecy, giving us a new message of Divine power and beneficence.

CHAPTER VII

MENDELSSOHN AND HIS "ELIJAH."

It is a saying of Wagner's that Mendelssohn restored calm to music, terrified by Beethoven. In our day, the Wagnerian does not put it so prettily. Mendelssohn was over-estimated during his lifetime, and he now pays the penalty. The ideals, too, for which he stood are no longer those of the younger generation of composers. So a cheap reputation for musical sagacity can now be had by running him down. Yet, although critics crow over the remains of Mendelssohn, the general public seem quite unaware that anything serious has happened to him. His *Lieder ohne Worte* are still tinkled in the schoolroom and the conservatory ; his *Scotch* and *Italian* symphonies are among the attractions of the orchestral

concert; his violin concerto is one of the most frequently heard works of its class; and his *Elijah* stands proudly beside *The Messiah*. Who that in music loves law and order and a plain tale can resist Mendelssohn, the graceful, restrained musician, whose orchestration is as limpid as a mountain stream, who never has a note out of its place, who never shocks us by indulging in anything approaching hysteria, who is sometimes dull but is never vulgar, who is, in short, "the perfect gentleman" of musical art?

Yet, as we go deeper into the study of music we are conscious of something lacking in Mendelssohn. In his lighter moods he is always charming. He can bring fairyland before us in his *Scherzos*, he can sing to us the prettiest of melodies, he can be picturesque, he can even be grandiose. But we soon learn to place him below Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and many others. While we may deprecate much of the modern unintelligent abuse of Mendelssohn, we cannot get away from the fact that "the perfect gentleman" is occa-

sionally shallow. Poor Schumann, the Browning of music, who felt deeper than he knew how to express, used to envy Mendelssohn the perfect fitness of his utterance for the thought which lay behind it. The truth is, Mendelssohn had not the weighty message of the other, and therefore could the easier express what was in his mind. Nothing is more striking in musical art than the slow growth of composers like Beethoven or Schumann. In each work they seem to make a new step. Each year of their life adds to their musical stature. We seem actually to see their minds grow. It is characteristic of Mendelssohn that he wrote the beautiful overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when he was seventeen years of age, and that, in all the successes of after-life, he never really did anything better.

But Mendelssohn is not only the kind of artist who comes early to maturity, he is also the exceptional famous composer who had no acquaintance with "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." Who can say how much his wide fame and material

prosperity had to do with the colour of his mind? A famous artist, who passed through a great sorrow, wrote in protest against such phrases as "the mystery of suffering." Suffering had been to him a revelation. He found himself looking at the whole of history from a new standpoint. Many things about his art formerly felt vaguely were now realised with perfect clearness and intensity. If suffering be a revelation, one ceases to wonder that nearly all great artists have been great sufferers. Mozart, who brings sunshine into the hearts of millions, struggled with adversity all his life, and was laid at last in an unknown grave. Beethoven's sorrows have given him a message for all who know the meaning of tears. Schubert, the tenderest and sweetest of singers, confessed that his music was the fruit of his genius and his misery.

Among those who have lived and suffered for art's sake, Mendelssohn stands a conspicuous exception. His father was a wealthy banker, proud of his brilliant, precocious son. A volume of youthful travel

letters tells how, at Weimar, he played his favourite pieces to Goethe, who sat "like Jupiter Tonans, with fire flashing from his aged eyes"; how he crossed the Alps and visited in turn Venice, Florence, Rome, Naples, Genoa, and Milan, spending nine months in Italy before proceeding to Switzerland. The letters reflect the eager curiosity and high spirits of a wealthy young man of culture, and one reads it all with a curious sense of contrast, remembering the early struggles of the majority of those who came before and after Mendelssohn in the line of great composers. In later life Mendelssohn was a god among his fellows. Kings even burned incense at his altar. A study of his life and letters reveals a very charming personality unspoilt by success, inspiring everywhere admiration and affection. Is there not something of irony in the fact that music's deepest secrets should be hidden from this brilliant, accomplished gentleman, and revealed to others who struggled grimly with sorrow and disaster? When Moscheles knelt in tears beside the bed of the dying Mendelssohn, there came into his mind the

striking passage near the end of the funeral march in Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony, where, above the suddenly hushed voices of the orchestra, there steals one of the most beautiful, pathetic themes that ever came from composer's pen. Before the wonder of such music, men have only been able to say that it is the voice of Heaven —a voice trembling with love and pity for poor humanity. Beethoven abounds in passages that bring Heaven nearer to earth than even the greatest of poetry. In all his friend's works, Moscheles could not have found any note so deep and comforting. Is it that one must suffer much to be able to speak such consolation ?

In writing the above, I feel as if I have been disparaging Mendelssohn unduly. But I have only been trying to express what I have felt to be lacking in the work of this most popular composer. After all, his great popularity has to be explained. We must not forget that he wrote "Oh, rest in the Lord," and hundreds of other pieces that have almost become part of the religious life of Europe. Whatever Mendelssohn

lacks, he has positive qualities of an undoubtedly high order. His was a genuinely musical nature. All in music that was lovely and of good report found in him an ardent admirer and propagandist. His scarcely concealed dislike for composers of the stamp of Berlioz or Wagner needs no explanation when we remember his reserve, his somewhat formal cast of mind, his fastidious sense of beauty, and their stormy eloquence which threw reserve to the winds, and spoke in hot, burning words of their hearts' most intimate secrets. All three were influenced by Beethoven, but each took something different from him. The limitations of my subject have compelled me to disregard many important sides of the composers under discussion. Of Mendelssohn's contribution to the symphony, the overture and kindred forms, I therefore can say nothing, but would merely remind the reader that, had Mendelssohn written no religious music, he would still have made a noteworthy contribution to musical art.

Mendelssohn was very reticent regarding

his inner life, but the following extract from a letter written when he was about thirty years of age, gives us a pleasant picture of him—"So I am said to have become a saint! If this is intended to convey what I conceive to be the meaning of the word, and what your expressions lead me to think you also understand by it, then I can only say, that, alas! I am not so, though every day of my life I strive with greater earnestness, according to my ability, more and more to resemble this character. I know, indeed, that I can never hope to be altogether a saint, but if I ever approach to be one it will be well. If people, however, understand by the word 'saint,' a Pietist, one of those who lay their hands on their laps, and expect that Providence will do their work for them, and who, instead of striving in their vocation to press on towards perfection, talk of a heavenly calling being incompatible with an earthly one, and are incapable of loving with their whole hearts any human being, or anything on earth—then, God be praised! such a one I am not, and hope never to become, so long as I live; and merely because

I am sincerely desirous to live piously, and really to be so, I hope does not necessarily entail the other character."

In his religious music Mendelssohn was largely influenced by Bach and Handel. From the former he got a certain breadth and dignity and also the indefinable something that the great master gives to the loving disciple. It will always be to the glory of Mendelssohn that he discovered the *St. Matthew Passion*, and revealed its beauties to the musicians of Europe. Mendelssohn took the oratorio of Handel, lopped off its long instrumental introductions and tailpieces, discarded its old-fashioned runs and endless repetitions of words, and generally tightened and strengthened the form. By comparing the *Messiah* with *Elijah* we may see the result at a glance. In *Elijah* the composer is at his best. The libretto by Bartholomew is well put together. The story of the old prophet is told with simple directness, and the complainings, exclamations, and reflections of the people, the exhortations to well-doing that arise out of the situations, are so

skilfully wrought into the texture, that one seems to be reading a single poem. It is almost with feelings of surprise that we discover this smoothly-running tale to be made up of extracts from all parts of the Bible. The Elijah who emerges from Mendelssohn's work is a very that person indeed. Of course, much of the value of works of art dealing with legendary or historical characters is just that they make real and living somebody or something that formerly was hazy and distant. It is impossible to say how much, in our ideas of ancient heroes, we are affected by the works of art through which we, perhaps, first see them with any degree of nearness. To countless people the *Faust* of Gounod has coloured deeply the *Faust* of Goethe; many know the former intimately who have little or no acquaintance with the latter. After one has heard the *Tristan and Isolda* of Wagner, all other versions of the legend seem pale and insignificant; to those susceptible to the influence of music there can now be only one Tristan and one Isolda.

As far as I can recall, the Elijah of the "Bible lesson" was to me a very remote person. I suppose to most children Old Testament history seems distant beyond words. I can well remember my first experience of the musical Elijah, how every incident in the old story became real and vivid. In the great scene on Mount Carmel one seemed actually to see the prophet, his solitariness and bravery alike emphasised by the hundred-throated shout for Baal. What point, too, was added to the sarcastic "Call him louder; for he is a god! He talketh; or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey; or peradventure he sleepeth!" It was all more real than a hundred ordinary Bible lessons! And so through all the work one followed the adventures of the brave old prophet as one would follow the adventures of a living man. In later years when the critical faculty is stronger, and Mendelssohn is less admired, one can never altogether dissociate the grand Old Testament figure from the popular oratorio that bears his name. A reference to any of the incidents of the old

story always brings back the music with its emotional warmth, giving, as it were, a glimpse into the heart of the chief actor. When it is remembered that Mendelssohn's *Elijah* is listened to by millions of people every year, it will be acknowledged that Mendelssohn has probably had more to do with the expounding of the character of the prophet than any school of commentators since his day.

It is difficult to say if the Mendelssohn's Elijah is exactly the Bible Elijah. I sometimes think Mendelssohn has made him too respectable. In any case the Elijah of the oratorio is a grand, dignified character, not without his lapses into petulance and fiery outbursts. He is splendid when, after the confusion of the prophets of Baal, Mendelssohn puts into his mouth the words of Jeremiah, "Is not His word like a fire?" He is weak and human when, as he flees from Jezebel, he echoes Job, "It is enough, O Lord; now take away my life."

The music which reflects the more specifically religious part of the text is

perhaps more comfortable than subtle. With Mendelssohn one may be at ease in Zion. The rolling periods speak of the assurance of a rounded creed, and the great popularity of the work bears witness to the power of music so inspired. Perhaps, however, it would be more correct to say that *Elijah* maintains its hold on the great mass of concert-goers by its dramatic scenes, and, most of all, by an easy tunefulness that brings it within the range of even the simplest music-lover. Mendelssohn, we have been told by one of his latter-day apologists, is not an eagle flying into the sun, but rather the robin who perches on our window-sill and appeals to our humanity. Well, it is somewhat difficult to think of Mendelssohn as a robin, but his song, at least, has a homely note and is easy of comprehension. In the lyrical moments of *Elijah* or *St. Paul*, however, one feels that Mendelssohn's religious experiences, however real they may have been, were different from those that visited the great hearts of Bach and Beethoven.

CHAPTER VIII

WAGNER AND HIS MUSIC-DRAMAS.

An ill-natured critic once said of Borodine, professor of medicine and chemistry, and a distinguished member of the Russian school of composers, that he was the greatest chemist among musicians and the greatest musician among chemists. Wagner may be said—without any intention to disparage—to be the greatest philosopher among musicians and the greatest musician among philosophers. He is more reliable, however, as a musician than as a philosopher. In the latter capacity he is rapidly being forgotten. Probably not one in a thousand of his present-day admirers has ever read a line of his prose. He said, himself, that he looked at life and its problems always as an artist. The artist com-

municates what he knows of life through the art-work, not through the philosophic treatise. His temperament, with its changes of heat and cold, its tendency to emotional excess, never allows him to be sufficiently detached from life to formulate logical theories that will convince the head. His business is primarily with the heart. He reaches the deeps of life by a kind of divine intuition, and expresses himself in his own peculiar medium. When the musician tries to put his message into words he is always more or less disappointing. Wagner wrote endlessly in explanation of his works, yet when hard pressed by Roeckel about some matter connected with *The Nibelung's Ring*, he was forced to cry: "It is wrong of you to challenge me to explain it in words; you must feel that something is being enacted that is not to be expressed in mere words." It was one of Wagner's many theories that music could hold the very essence of religion. The mysterious force or feeling which lies behind all the creeds of men could, as it were, be caught in music, and presented apart from Church

and dogma and all the contentions for which these are responsible. Ardent Wagnerians profess to find Wagner's claim made good in the strangely disturbing music of *Parsifal*. But Wagner was not content to leave his music to tell its own tale. He supplemented his music-dramas with numberless treatises, pamphlets and letters. A stray word or two is all we have of Beethoven's view of life. What strange visions came to him, what spiritual experiences he passed through, his music tells with wonderful power. Yet he advanced no theories. He spoke as he was moved and in the language he knew best. Of most other composers the same might be said. Berlioz and Schumann took up the critic's pen, but they did so largely through force of circumstances, and, although they contributed much that is valuable and stimulating, they made no attempt at an elaborate philosophy of their art. Mendelssohn, with evident anger, wrote to a correspondent that the great composer, when he comes, does not write a book. So Wagner and his ten fat volumes of

prose, have been looked at askance. People asked what was this art that needed so much explanation. The complete art-work should be able to stand without a scaffolding of words.

Wagner wrote because he could not help it. Perhaps it would be unfair to say that he was one of those who, under misapprehension and persecution, are seized with "the lunacy of ink." He found operatic art, as he thought, false and insincere, divorced from the life of the people, and he conceived the idea of a great united art, to which music, poetry, painting, sculpture and architecture should contribute, which should educate and raise the people, and bring the theatre back to the position it held in the life of ancient Greece. The last word in pure music, he contended, had been said by Beethoven. The future was for music-drama. Wagner's music and his theories were met at first with derision. People without the least idea of what it was all about credited the composer with a thousand absurdities. So, to confound adversaries and reassure

friends, he issued pamphlets and essays in an almost constant stream. It must be remembered, too, that Wagner had a real literary gift. To write was as natural to him as to compose. His style is turgid at times, but his criticisms have a vigour that is very refreshing. All his librettos are from his own hand. Lest it be thought that the many contributions to social questions scattered over the prose works are those of a mere arm-chair philosopher, it may be stated here that Wagner gave up a comfortable post to take the side of the people in the Dresden revolution of 1849. His position was purely that of an idealist, but that did not prevent sentence of banishment from being passed on him. For twelve years he wandered uneasily in strange lands. But, as in his early struggles in Paris, the man was always true to the inner voice. Great elaborate works were planned, written and composed with hardly the faintest hope of performance. It is significant that, once when in the grip of despair he felt he must forsake his ideals, he did not think of

turning his mind to the composition of lighter and more conventional music which would almost certainly have brought him fortune, but to non-musical work altogether. He could not write music against his convictions. Genius, however, triumphed at last. His early works began to be performed all over Germany. Through the intercession of friends, his sentence of exile was withdrawn. King Louis of Bavaria took up his cause, and eventually the Festival Theatre was built, and Bayreuth became the Mecca of musicians.

For a long time Europe was divided into two musical camps. The Wagnerian looked on "The Master" as a kind of god. Every one of his words was sacred. Profundities were found in his most casual sayings. His art doctrines were eternal truth. His music was the only possible music. "Reckless, wild, extravagant and demagogic cacophony, the symbol of profligate libertinage," will give the reader an idea of what the anti-Wagnerian was capable. As it is not my intention to discuss Wagner's operatic reforms, I may

say here that, as far as actual music is concerned, the anti-Wagnerian has died out. Wagner's glorious contribution to the art is universally recognised. The Wagner controversy in most of its aspects is forgotten. Wagner is pigeon-holed, and critics have found in Strauss quite other matters to quarrel about.

The position of the average modern critic towards Wagner's prose works is one of impatience. When Wagnerism was a kind of religion, the transcendental obscurities of the master may have had a charm for some minds. But critics now get on pedestals to praise Wagner ; they no longer do so from their knees. Then, Wagner's essays were written at different periods in a long life, in different frames of mind, and under widely differing impulses. As I have already said, he was too much of an artist to be a great philosopher. Whatever his subject, he throws himself into it with burning energy. He detests the Jews, and writes on "Judaism in Music" to prove that no Jew can be a great artist. Art is the intimate voice of

nation-hood, and the Jew, being an alien "in the midst of a society he does not understand, with whose tastes and aspirations he does not sympathise, whose history and evolution have always been indifferent to him," can only be an imitator. He cannot find the Jehovah of the Old Testament in the God of the New, and would divorce Christianity altogether from Judaism. When he writes of his art, he often shows the most profound insight, but in other matters he is not infrequently self-contradictory. Of course a plausible story can be made of Wagner's theories. Popular handbooks on Wagner have them all sorted out and arranged in chapters. But let the seeker after Wagnerian truth, whose curiosity goes beyond the music dramas themselves, leave the trim paths of popular commentary, and he will find himself in the midst of confusion. He may take up, for example, Marcel Herbert's *Le Sentiment Réligieux dans l'Œuvre de Richara Wagner*, and find that the composer, from *The Flying Dutchman* to *Parsifal*, is gradually being led to the central truths of Christi-

anity. If he turns to Nordau's *Degeneration* he will learn to his astonishment that Wagner is a degenerate, with "the stigmata of this morbid condition united in him with the most complete and most luxuriant development." A recent book on art by a doctor of divinity tells him that, with the exception of *The Messiah*, *Parsifal* is the greatest redemption music in the world. An English critic of Wagner will prove for him that *Parsifal* is an immoral work. *The Nibelung's Ring* is to Bernard Shaw a striking sermon on Socialism. To Tolstoy, one of the high-priests of Socialism, it is a counterfeit work of art. With one, *Tannhäuser* solves the sex problem. With another, it is merely "the recoil from the boudoir to the monastery." Wagner has been called an erotic madman, and he has been called a great religious teacher. In a sense, we are all Wagnerians now. We exalt the composer, but are somewhat suspicious of the philosopher. If you wish to get into touch with Wagner you must go to his music-dramas. If they leave you cold, the prose works, with their

theories, will not help you much. If Wagner interests you as musician and dramatist you will not be long in getting at the man and his attitude to many of the problems of life.

In Wagner's music-dramas an extraordinary place is given to love. In *Was nützt diese Erkenntniss?* we find: "Through what is it that our whole civilisation is going to ground, if not through lack of Love? The heart of youth, to which the world of nowadays unveils itself with waxing plainness, how can it love this world when it is recommended naught save caution and suspicion in its dealings with it? Surely there can be but one right way of guidance for that heart, the path whereon the world's great loveless should be accounted as its *suffering:* then would the young man's roused compassion incite him to withdraw himself from the causes of that suffering of the world's, to flee with knowledge from the greed of passions, to lessen and avert the woes of others." Here is the Wagnerian version of "The greatest of these is

Charity : " "Only the love that springs from pity, and carries its compassion to the utmost breaking of self-will, is the redeeming Christian Love, in which *Faith* and *Hope* are included of themselves—*Faith* as the unwavering consciousness of that moral meaning of the world, confirmed by the most divine exemplar ; *Hope* as the blessed sense of the impossibility of any cheating of this consciousness."

Love in Wagner's works is presented in all its forms, spiritual and sensual, redemptive and destroying. Redemption through love is a favourite thought. It appears as early as *The Flying Dutchman*. The fifteenth-century legend of "The Flying Dutchman" tells of a Dutch sea captain, who, one stormy night, trying in vain to round the Cape of Good Hope, swore in blasphemous rage that he would accomplish his purpose if he required eternity for it. As a punishment, he was condemned by the devil to sail the seas for ever, carrying everywhere storm and disaster. It was Heine, I believe, who first conceived the idea of saving him through

the sacrificing love of a woman. Wagner elaborated the idea and gave us the story in the form so familiar to the music-lover. The Dutchman comes ashore after one of his many seven-year voyages to seek the "maiden faithful and true," who is his only hope of release, and meets Daland, who, dazzled by his wealth, offers him the hand of his daughter. Senta, however, is melted in pity for the stranger, and finds no difficulty in loving him for his own sake —or rather for his unhappiness. When the Dutchman, suspecting unfaithfulness, sets sail without her, she throws herself into the sea in an endeavour to follow him. The ghostly ship, with all its strange crew, immediately sinks, and a ray of light from the sky reveals Senta and the Dutchman rising above the waters in each other's arms.

If Wagner's subjects have sometimes the appearance of remoteness from his life, they are none the less related to actual experience. *The Flying Dutchman* is to some extent a record of his painful struggles in Paris. On his way to London by ship, the composer encountered a storm that

came near ending his troubles altogether, and in the very heart of it all the story of *The Flying Dutchman* began to take shape. In Paris, when failure and poverty almost drove him to suicide, the Dutchman, tossed eternally on an angry sea and praying only for rest, became like a brother in distress. In setting the old legend to music, Wagner was voicing his own sorrows. About the redemption of the wild-eyed hero, however, one does not feel quite comfortable. He seems somehow to stand outside the process. He is the same man all the time. Senta's action has a spiritual value for herself, but it affects the Dutchman merely externally. His relation to his salvation is only one of acquiescence, and the last scene seems more like a pretty finish to a story than anything else.

In *Tannhäuser* the idea of redemption is more convincingly presented. Tannhäuser, as some one has put it, is a poet full of noble aspirations. His eyes are turned imploringly to heaven; his hands are clasped in prayer; but his feet are glued to earth. The lusts of the body hold him

fast. In Venusberg, in which the opening of the drama finds him, a subtle poison has stolen into his blood. He returns to Nature and men in a fit of revulsion from sensual pleasures, and, with the pure, deep love of Elizabeth, a new life seems to open out before him. Then in the Tournament of Song, roused to passionate protest against the cold loves sung by Wolfram and the rest, he forgets his surroundings, and sings a wild hymn in praise of Venus. "Here," writes Wagner, "stands he on the summit of his life-glad ardour, and naught can dash him from the pinnacle of transport whereon he plants his solitary standard 'gainst the whole wide world—nothing but the one experience whose utter newness, whose variance with all his past, now suddenly usurps the field of his emotions: the woman *who offers up* herself for love of him." In short, what changes Tannhäuser's whole attitude towards his past life is his realisation of it as a sin against the highest love. "His love for Elizabeth," writes Wagner again, "proclaims the vastness of its difference

from that for Venus; her, whose gaze he can no longer bear, whose words pierce his breast like a sword—to her must he atone, and expiate by fearsome tortures the torture of her love for him." "Her tears to sweeten, the tears she weeps o'er his great sin," is the motive that drives him on his pilgrim journey to Rome. Tannhäuser is cursed by the Pope:

> "And as this barren staff I hold
> Ne'er will put forth a flow'r or leaf,
> Thus shalt thou never more behold
> Salvation nor thy sin's relief;"

—and, in hatred of the unforgiving world, is tempted once more to Venusberg. But he is met at the threshold by the bier of Elizabeth, and, as in an agony of love and remorse, he falls lifeless beside it, messengers arrive from Rome with the budded rod, speaking of Heaven's forgiveness. The significance of the fact that Heaven here pardons the repentant sinner in spite of Popes and Churches will not be lost on the reader.

The redemption of Tannhäuser has been as fiercely criticised as anything else per-

taining to Wagnerian drama. I have already said that the work has been called "the recoil from the boudoir to the monastery." Wagner himself has been credited with all the evil desires of Tannhäuser, and his drama is, so to speak, the drunkard's temporary fit of loathing for the bottle. This is Nordau's view, but far too much has been made of it. All great art is the result of experience at first hand, or, at least, of a peculiar sympathy that can make the experience of others its own. Shakespeare "probed from hell to hell of human passions" because his sympathy was so broad that it included in its sweep the very worst of men. Wagner has not given us many types, but his principal characters are never merely "observed" in cold blood. It is the recognition of possibilities of evil in our own hearts that makes us understand the sinner. Even if Wagner were not as Tannhäuser, we may be sure he felt all the attractions of the sin that led the minstrel knight astray. All Wagner's characters, good and bad, were probably parts of himself. Like every man with a strong

emotional nature, Wagner had to fight a stern battle with himself as well as with the world. *Tristan und Isolde*, even more than *Tannhäuser*, tells us what part of the battle was like. But his love for his fellow men, and his earnest seeking after truth, keep our thoughts of him sweet. The problem of *Tannhäuser* has received much attention from Tolstoy. The author of *The Kreutzer Sonata* preaches a purely negative gospel. Wagner would redeem men from the lower love by the power of the higher.

CHAPTER IX

WAGNER AND HIS MUSIC-DRAMAS (CONTINUED)

AFTER *Tannhäuser*, with its passion and pain, came the ethereal *Lohengrin*, telling of the shining Knight of the Grail and his sweet lady—how they met and loved and parted. The atmosphere of the drama is that of the fairy tale. Elsa, wrongly accused, calls on the Champion of her dreams, and Lohengrin comes out of the sunset in a boat drawn by a swan. Before the king and assembled nobles, the hero and heroine plight their troth, and Lohengrin makes it a condition of their future life together that Elsa shall not ask his name or whence he came. On this the drama turns. Telramund is defeated, but with the assistance of his wife, Ortrud, he succeeds in poisoning Elsa's mind. The fatal question is put,

and, after explanations before king and court, Lohengrin goes back to Montsalvat and the Knights of the Grail.

Those who are not satisfied with a plain story may, with Wagner's consent, regard Lohengrin as the Ideal that, seen first in vision, visits distressed humanity in answer to longing and prayer ; and Elsa, as a type of humanity that, not content to receive a great happiness, must needs doubt the giver, and, seeking to peer behind the veil, lose all. It is like the beautiful old Greek myth of Love and Psyche; or, if one would be quite modern, it is a story of the "dusty answer," which, according to one of our poets, the soul receives "when hot for certainties in this our life." Wagner would not in matters of detail tie us down to a hard and fast interpretation of his work, but he insisted that it is from some such standpoint that the drama and its music can be understood at all. For the key to *Lohengrin* he said, in effect, one must look into the heart of Elsa. I am afraid if Wagner were alive to-day he would have little sympathy with certain of the Woman's Rights party.

Ortrud is his political woman. She looks at the world with loveless eyes. "Ortrud," he writes to Liszt, "est une femme . . . *qui ne connait point l'amour*. C'est tout dire, et c'est dire ce qu'il y a de plus terrible. Elle ne vit que par la politique. Un *homme* politique est désagréable, mais une femme politique est horrible ; c'est cette horreur que j'avais à representer."

Die Meistersinger, although the brightest and sanest of Wagner's dramas, need not be discussed here in detail. It speaks simply of the joy of life, free from any pale cast of thought. A fine performance of the work sends one away feeling that it is good to be alive. One wishes sometimes that young composers, enamoured of melancholy and Byronic poses, would remember more frequently that Wagner wrote *Die Meistersinger* as well as *Tristan und Isolde*. Self-probings with leanings to pessimism become very tiresome after a time, and of these we have had more than enough in musical art during recent years. The motive of *Die Meistersinger* is the triumph of youth and enthusiasm over the unintelligent conserva-

tism of the Philistine. There is a "love interest," but it is merely incidental. Without *Die Meistersinger* the range of Wagnerian drama would not be complete. To those who accuse Wagner of degenerate tendencies one can always point to its splendid health and overflowing spirits. Such music could never come from a degenerate mind.

Some have identified the passionate love of *Tristan und Isolde* with Schopenhauer's "will to live." The longings for death and eternal night, that make up so much of the love duet of the second act, have also been traced to the Schopenhauerian scheme, which, it need hardly be said, ends in negation. No doubt many of Wagner's friends, shocked by the story, are glad to call in Philosophy to make things respectable. The recent publication of the Wagner-Wesendonk correspondence, however, has completely disposed of the purely philosophic basis. No one sensitive to the power of music can doubt for a moment that in *Tristan und Isolde* we have something intensely human and personal. The story is

not a pleasant one. The love of Tristan and Isolde is not the poet's "time of roses." Even Browning's "how sad and bad and mad it was—but then how it was sweet!" hardly meets the case. The passion of the immortal pair is nine-tenths pain. It is the elemental call of sex raised to its highest power. Under its influence Tristan and Isolde can only long for death. The music makes one of the greatest emotional appeals in the whole range of art. Perhaps much of it is not very healthy, but at the end, in Isolde's magnificent Death-song, love seems to rise out of grossness to an assertion of its immortality. In any case, the final note is one of triumph. The work tells with a directness and power, that belong to music alone, the story of Wagner's love for Mathilde Wesendonk. *Tristan und Isolde* is as much a part of Wagner as *Parsifal*. Wagner's experience helped him to understand the unfortunate lovers, and to make the old legend vivid beyond words; but, as I pointed out when writing of *Tannhäuser*, it by no means follows that he was the sensu-

alist some unsympathetic critics have argued him to be.

The Nibelung's Ring is a gigantic work, requiring four evenings for performance. Even with the hundreds of explanations that have been written of the story, the searcher after "hidden meanings" will find himself at times puzzled and disappointed. The trouble is that Wagner mixes up allegory and mere story-telling. It has been said that an allegory is never quite consistent except when it is written by some one without the dramatic faculty, in which case it is unreadable. *The Ring* is certainly not consistent. I shall not trouble the reader with a detailed sketch of the involved plot of the four dramas that make up Wagner's great work. The central figure is the god Wotan, who may be said to stand for modern civilisation. Wotan has leanings towards good, but his better impulses cannot get free play. He has bound himself by an endless number of laws. In *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walkyrie* we see him driven to strange shifts to keep himself in security, rebelling at times against his own

laws, yet forced to obey them. In the third drama appears young Siegfried, descended from Wotan by a mortal woman. In deriving his hero from Wotan himself, Wagner probably means that from the old civilisation, on its better side, shall come the power that is to bring about a new and better order of things. Some have identified Siegfried with Nietzsche's "Overman," others take him as representative of the young Germany party of Wagner's revolutionary days. He is the ideal revolutionary, strong and healthy, following his own instincts without fear. Wotan's spear, with many laws engraved on the shaft, is shattered when it attempts to bar his progress. Much of the fourth drama, *The Twilight of the Gods*, it is impossible to weave into the allegory. In the end Siegfried is slain, and Valhalla, representing the old order of things, is swept away.

The Ring is crowded with characters, and there are many subsidiary incidents. Brunnhilde, the goddess who becomes a woman, presents another side of Wagner's conception of love. The ring, referred to

in the title, is forged by Alberich, the dwarf, from the stolen Rhine-gold. To possess the gold he had first to renounce love. The curse of the ring plays an important part in the work, and is undoubtedly pointed at social conditions prevailing in our and in Wagner's time. In the opening drama, when Alberich sets his brother dwarfs toiling in the depths of the earth to add to his treasure, we see the evil power of wealth divorced from love. The Exhibition of Sweated Industries, recently organised by a popular London newspaper, may be said to have shown us a similar picture. *The Ring*, in many of its aspects, is certainly very modern.

For many of the readings of *The Ring* offered by enthusiastic Wagnerians, the author and composer can hardly be held responsible. On broad lines, however, the meaning of the work is fairly plain. One might point, perhaps, to a general difficulty in sympathising with the fortunes of gods, giants and dwarfs, drawn from dateless mythologies, and moving among marvels that sometimes suggest the Christmas panto-

mime. Wagner, of course, intended to preach, and his characters meant a great deal to him. But the average man is much more interested in human beings than in gods. A drama showing the play of human passions will always reach and hold men with a force impossible under other conditions. To doubt whether such a message as Wagner sought to deliver could be incorporated successfully in music-drama, is to open up too large a question for treatment here. Much of *The Ring* would be hopelessly dull if it were not for its extraordinary music. As I have said elsewhere, Wagner, the preacher, receives very little attention nowadays. It is his music by which he lives. The glories of the composer have blinded men to the great things the poet and philosopher hoped to make plain. If the reader has any doubts of this, let him ask his musical friends a few questions about the social significance of *The Nibelung's Ring.*

The religion of *Parsifal* is a religion of humanity. Parsifal, "the guileless fool," is found by Gurnemanz, and taken to

Montsalvat, where he is witness of the agony and remorse of Amfortas. Amfortas, head of the brotherhood of the Grail, had set out against the magician Klingsor, only to fall before the charms of Kundry, who is the magician's slave. He loses the sacred spear, and receives a wound which refuses to heal. Parsifal is thrilled with compassion by the heartbroken cry of the suffering king, but he does not understand. Later he meets Kundry before the castle of her master, and is tempted with a woman's kiss. This kiss is Parsifal's awakening. His own emotion reveals to him the meaning of sin, and throws light on Amfortas's pain. He sees sin and its results, as it were, at the same glance. It is from Parsifal that Wagner fashions his redeemer. "The love that springs from pity, and carries its compassion to the utmost breaking of self-will," enables Parsifal to conquer the darker powers, and bring light and healing to others.

In *Parsifal* one finds obvious traces of the philosophy of Schopenhauer. With the guileless hero, "the will to live" is

conquered, and becomes "the will to redeem." In this work of his old age Wagner preaches renunciation. Self must be conquered, and love for others springing from compassion is the means by which the result is to be attained. About Parsifal as the redeemer of Amfortas and Kundry and the restorer of the glories of Montsalvat, I must confess to some difficulties. Amfortas, like the Flying Dutchman, is, so to speak, presented with his salvation. He suffers, it is true, but he stands outside the process of redemption. In the case of Tannhäuser, the love of Elizabeth works a revolution in the man's own nature; and if he is redeemed, it is that he sees his sins in the light of that love, and is led to repentance. Here one may speak of the redeeming power of love. I am aware that the "free gift" of salvation that Parsifal brings has some analogy in Christian doctrine. Many small incidents, indeed, go to show that Wagner based his Parsifal on Jesus. But the object of these chapters on Wagner has been merely to evolve some of the great musician's social and religious ideas

from his work. Any elaborate criticism or excursion into theology is not intended. Having stated my difficulty about Wagner's redemptive scheme, I may leave the matter without much further discussion.

Wagner's position in *Parsifal* is frankly Pessimism. Life is an evil thing, full of suffering. We must renounce it, and strive, in pity for our fellows, to make things as easy as possible. But it leads only to the grave, to the final peace of annihilation. It has been advanced that Wagner's philosophic position in *Parsifal* is that of age looking over a life of sore struggle, and conscious only of weakness and a desire for rest. The joy of life that informed *Die Meistersinger* and carried young Siegfried on to conquest has ebbed. *Parsifal* in all its details, would probably not have commended itself to the Wagner of the barricades. Yet, in purely musical power, *Parsifal* shows no falling off. A strange, ethereal beauty meets us at the threshold and goes with us to the end. It is true that there is nothing of the mag-

nificent assurance of Handel, the soaring ecstasy of Bach, or the defiant faith of Beethoven. *Parsifal* was written by a disciple of Schopenhauer, who was "almost a Christian."

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